

# Seven Tips That Will Help You Stick to Your New Year's Resolution to Reduce Stress



It is extremely common to feel depressed and tired during winter's cold and dark days, especially once December's festivities have passed. As a result, people often resolve to reduce their stress levels and find more ways to relax at the start of a new year. However, this new year's resolution is famously hard to keep, especially once the year's work obligations begin to pile up. Read on to discover seven tips that will help you to stay focused on improving your life by becoming less stressed this year.

## **1) Make any other new year's resolutions realistic**

One common reason for failing to keep a new year's resolution to reduce your stress levels is intimately connected to other resolutions that you may choose to make. If you are anxious about achieving a large range of difficult goals, this can make you feel paralyzed and end up dramatically increasing your stress levels. If you want to be happier and more relaxed in the coming year, make sure that you choose a small number of realistic resolutions that focus on making manageable but important changes to the way you approach your life.

## **2) Consider keeping a stress journal**

If you dedicate a notebook to your quest, you may be able to learn more about the things that make you unhappy so that you can modify your responses or even remove some sources of stress from your life. Every time you feel overcome by feelings of stress, keep track of the experience by writing down what caused the stress, how it made you feel, and what eventually helped to reduce the negative feelings or helped you to relax. Some popular and useful examples include meditation, spending time outdoors, listening to music, taking a long bath, interacting with an affectionate pet, booking a massage treatment, watching comedy, and reading fiction. After a while, you will start to see patterns emerging, and these patterns can help you make productive changes to your routine and help you to see which helpful methods of stress relief you should try to repeat.

### **3) Think about whether you suffer from seasonal affective disorder (or SAD)**

If you are particularly susceptible to stress and depression during the winter months (even when your life is going well by all objective measures), you may be suffering from SAD. People with SAD typically feel tired and unhappy due to a lack of natural sunlight. If you think that you might be afflicted with this condition, there are several things you can do in order to combat it and thereby reduce your stress levels. You may try taking a daily walk before it gets dark, or you might investigate light boxes that attempt to alleviate SAD by simulating natural light.

### **4) Face up to any problems you experience**

If you want to reduce stress levels, it is vital to be honest with yourself and work out the source of your negative feelings when you experience them. If you try to write down all of your problems (whether they are social, familial or related to your job), you can then use this list to tackle the issues head-on and work out possible solutions.

### **5) Avoid unhealthy methods of reducing stress**

There are certain ways of temporarily reducing stress that can actually thwart your new year's resolution by eventually causing more stress. These methods include smoking, drinking too much alcohol, withdrawing from your social circle, sleeping too much, depending on painkillers or other drugs to induce feelings of calmness, and taking your stress out on other people by starting arguments. If you are prone to using these coping mechanisms, talking to your family doctor or approaching a counselor should help you to find support and cultivate healthier coping mechanisms.

### **6) Exercise more often**

Many people find that exercising helps to reduce stress levels, as it can improve your mood by promoting the release of endorphins. Endorphins are chemicals that naturally trigger positive feelings and an increase in physical energy.

### **7) Make time to relax every day**

Finally, while it is good to know about all the things that can reduce your stress levels, such a list of ways to relax is of very little use if you rarely make time to indulge in these activities. If you want to keep your new year's resolution to reduce stress levels, do your best to enjoy one of your stress-reducing activities at some point every day.

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